

Student Support Services Annual Review



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Service Value Assessment: Academic Year 2019/20

Completing the report

- The report should be the output of a reflective process, focusing on
 - activities **over the past academic year**,
 - **the student experience** and
 - activities that relate to student use of the service.
- The report should be brief, **no longer than 5 pages** and should reflect on specific changes implemented in response to disruption during industrial action and Covid-19. Focus on what worked well, what worked less well and what you might continue going forward.

Text in *italics* is for guidance; please replace it with your own content.

The [Student Support Services Review Policy](#) contains an overview of the process.

Service:	Chaplaincy
Submitted by:	Harriet Harris, Head of Chaplaincy Service
Date:	06/11/2020

Reflection on 2019/20

Focusing on the student experience, summarise the impacts of industrial action and Covid-19 on how the Service operated in 2019/20.

1. *A brief outline of and reflection on any new developments in response to industrial action/Covid-19 and their impact on service delivery (doing new things).*

Our work did not change significantly due to industrial action.

In response to Covid-19, we did the following

- Moved the [Listening Service](#) to phone, video-call, or email consultations in March with immediate effect. Users and Listeners adapted well, and we also provided conversation for SSOs/SSTs about the experience of supporting students using these media. In October we began to offer the LS 24/7. We are therefore experiencing a higher take-up of our 24/7 emergency on-call rota, and this is mostly falling to the staff Chaplains rather than Honorary Team due to the seriousness of the nature of requests.
- Created on-line support and presence for the student Religion and Belief societies.
- Gave the large rooms in the Chaplaincy Centre over to teaching once students returned in September.
- Opened up for in-person appointments from September onwards Tues-Thurs with staff on a rota to reduce numbers in the building.
- Initiated weekly blogs to respond to the new and rapidly changing circumstances, [For Times Like These](#). These have enable people outside of UoE to engage with our provision,

and have also been picked up and disseminated by the Staff Bulletin, as has the Mindletter (see below). Included in these blogs was a special message and [poem to our graduating students](#) in the summer of 2020 that we compiled, gathering input from staff across UoE Schools and Services. The School of Economics went on to [film a reading of this poem](#) for their website.

- Created a [Compassion for our Times](#) section on our website to highlight the pertinence of compassion during a global pandemic, and to bring together the work we do in teaching compassion practice and drawing on compassion research for its relevance to HE. This has also been a space to give voice to students writing about experiences of race at the University, in light of Black Lives Matter, and to write about their research in relation to compassion and animals, and intercultural compassion
 - Gained wider engagement within and outwith UoE with new [Daily Prayers and Reflections](#), which we ran March-June
 - The podcast series: [Life in Lockdown](#) enabled us to keep UoE members connected and conversant about experiences of being locked down in Edinburgh and around the world, and also to highlight particular types of experience including impact upon mental health, impact upon those who are hearing impaired, effects upon hospital and care workers. We are carrying the series on into Semester 1 by demand: highlighting the benefits of physical exercise with CSE, and a special episode for Islamophobia Awareness Month.
 - Established written mindfulness sessions, which have now evolved into a weekly [Mindletter](#), also often disseminated in the Staff Bulletin and receiving significant feedback as to its helpfulness, and two UoE-wide weekly [virtual sessions](#)
 - Adapted our [website](#) extensively to give users ready access to the new online offerings.
 - Given the efficacy of support we were offering to other staff, we have begun supporting Res Life in separate monthly gatherings for RAs and Wardens, plus a gathering for the core management team
 - Provided gatherings for Lebanese and Nigerian students in the aftermath of crises in their countries, and assisted their linking up with one another – working with Ed Global on this.
 - Created a new resource for students and staff called [Abundant Academy](#), comprising core courses with an emphasis on [Replenishing](#) for Semester 1, and drawing attention to our [Library of Abundance](#), with the variety of wellbeing resources available from the Chaplaincy. This has had rapid uptake (staff and UG courses over-subscribed but we have rolled everyone in) and is receiving significant feedback as to its efficacy for people.
 - Provided 15-minute daily wellbeing workouts for students who are self-isolating
 - Made the STEPPS, Syrian Tutoring Programme, on-line, initially for the training of the tutors, and now for meeting with the tutees, and also created an event for Refugee Week.
2. *A brief outline of and reflection on changes made to activities, processes, practices or policies, in response to industrial action/Covid-19 (doing the same things in a new way).*
- Reconceived Reception-working so that Reception-postholders are able to re-direct their attention to much-needed administrative activities whilst not needing to work on site, including website restructuring and maintaining, admin for the LS and its new Head, and support of the Honorary Team and of the Religion and Belief Societies – especially important when we are not able to see them in-person.
 - Moved the monthly [Mindfulness retreats](#) online
 - Moved [Capacitar Tai Chi](#) online, providing a video, on-line weekly session, and a 4-week course

- Moved [Dreamwhispering](#), Wander Society, [Yoga](#), and Lectio Divina online, and increased Lectio Divina from monthly to weekly sessions.
- Moved the [Ecospirituality](#) course online
- Increased the rate of SSO/SST Chaplaincy gatherings from 1 or 2 a semester to fortnightly
- Increased the Senior Tutor gatherings from monthly to fortnightly
- We have returned to in-person Communion service in Semester 1.
- Honorary Team meetings are being kept up fortnightly, and LS training monthly, all now happening online
- Remembrance Sunday Service we have filmed with CAM and Protocol, in lieu of a live in-person service
- We have firmed up plans to film the Carol Service in a similar way.

3. *What has worked well (include any partnership working activity):*

We noted the risk of an Act of God, or act of all gods or none, in our risk assessment last year, and we believe this has come to pass.

The Listening Service has kept up with demand and proved agile and responsive. We appointed a Head of LS (a new post) just before lockdown was called, and she took up the role during lockdown. This new appointment has enabled us to maintain a fast response rate – response within 24 hours of enquiry and usually same day - which was being tested before we had this extra capacity. The new Head is also unifying recording procedures. SDS is offering support to help us to sustain the LS with increased demand. We are in conversation about ways in which this might work, where the main extra resource needed is for the 24/7 LS cover, especially at weekends. [180 sessions LS given so far from Sept to early Nov 2021. Main area of growth is in the extra 24/7 service, responding to an ave of 2.5 calls a weekend. Also responding to 1-2 hospitalisations a week.](#)

The Staff Bulletin has picked up on the Mindfulness writings, and a number of Chaplaincy blogs and the Abundant Academy, and created stories and republications of these, especially of the Mindfulness material, which has increased readership. The blogs have an ave 300 readers p.w. The Mindletter has c 800 readers p.w.

Growth in Mindfulness:

Mindletter, c 800 readers p.w.

Recordings, 40 listens over the first weekend

Virtual drop-ins, c 40 p.w.

Student course 24 p.w.

Staff course 23 p.w.

All of these figures represent growth. The Mindletter and recordings are new, so a growth from 0. Virtual drop-ins show a 30% increase on what was possible space-permitting, for physical drop-ins. Student and Staff courses include those on the waiting list being rolled in (we have previously capped at 20 participants per course).

Working with CAM and Rebecca Shade to produce the podcasts has enabled 15 new episodes to go out since lockdown began. The podcasts have over 2.5k downloads recorded on the anchor site, and Schools have also put the podcasts onto Media Hopper for their students.

Working with Protocol and CAM for Remembrance Sunday and Christmas – always good working with them, and everyone is being creative and flexible.

Working with the Mosques to help accommodate Muslim students given the difficulty of providing prayer space on campus.

Working with EdGlobal to support students and staff from troubled places around the world.

We compiled a list of unsolicited feedback during the lockdown months, which we attach as an appendix in case of interest.

Abundant Academy: rapid uptake and full courses, having efficacy for staff who have suffered burnout or feel themselves heading towards burnout; efficacy for students suffering imposter syndrome, anxiety about leaving their flats (agoraphobic), overwhelm with workload, and loneliness.

4. *What worked less well:*

The 15-minute wellbeing workouts had little up-take and we have discontinued these after three weeks, in favour of our mainstream events and our written and recorded material.

Providing in-person provision three days a week is appreciated by a few users, who really benefit from in-person contact, or from having somewhere to come to when distressed. However, it is not used as much as it could be, and the vast majority of our users are accessing us by email, phone or video-call.

Our connection with the religion and belief societies is harder to sustain when we do not see people in-person. The support we give them works well, but we are less involved with one another.

We are receiving a lot of approaches from local churches and community groups asking if they can help with supporting students, and we have not known how to utilise potential support there, whilst keeping it safe, within guidelines, quality control etc. There is an opportunity for University-City relationship building here, but hard to see how to organise and capitalise on that.

5. *What changes might you continue going forward:*

- Mindletter, and Mindfulness recordings made available on the website.
- Drawing on support from other departments to help sustain the Listening Service, if it is available.
- Blogs
- Abundant Academy
- We would like to continue recording podcasts on matters of importance and relevance to the UoE community if there is resource from other departments to assist with editing them

May 2020